

One year of smokefree bars and restaurants in New Zealand: impacts and responses

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: New Zealand introduced a smokefree bars and restaurants policy in December 2004. We reviewed the data available at December 2005 on the main public health, societal and political impacts and responses within New Zealand to the new law. **METHODS:** Data were collected from publicly available survey reports, and from government departments and interviews. This included data on smoking in bars, attitudes to smokefree bars, bar patronage, socially cued smoking, and perceived rights to smokefree workplaces. **RESULTS:** The proportion of surveyed bars with smoking occurring decreased from 95% to 3% during July 2004-April 2005. Between 2004 and 2005, public support for smokefree bars rose from 56% to 69%. In the same period, support for the rights of bar workers to have smokefree workplaces rose from 81% to 91%. During the first ten months of the smokefree bars policy, there were only 196 complaints to officials about smoking in the over 9900 licensed premises. The proportion of smokers who reported that they smoked more than normal at bars, nightclubs, casinos and cafes halved between 2004 and 2005 (from 58% to 29%). Seasonally adjusted sales in bars and clubs changed little (0.6% increase) between the first three quarters of 2004 and of 2005, while cafe and

restaurant sales increased by 9.3% in the same period. Both changes continued existing trends. Compared to the same period in 2004, average employment during the first three quarters of 2005 was up 24% for 'pubs, taverns and bars', up 9% for cafes/restaurants, and down 8% for clubs (though employment in 'pubs, taverns and bars' may have been affected by unusually high patronage around a major sports-series). The proportion of bar managers who approved of smokefree bars increased from 44% to 60% between November 2004 and May 2005. Bar managers also reported increased agreement with the rights of bar workers and patrons to smokefree environments. The main reported concerns of the national and regional Hospitality Associations, in 2005, were the perceived negative effects on rural and traditional pubs. CONCLUSION: As in other jurisdictions, the introduction of smokefree bars in New Zealand has had positive overall health protection, economic and social effects; in contrast to the predictions of opponents

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